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## **The Role of Community - Based Organizations in the Community and Economic Development of Rural Areas**

### **Vimansha Ekanayaka, Dishna Ranasinghe**

This study examines the implementation of the community economic development model in community-based organizations (CBO) built under the concept of community development. The aim of this research was to identify the traditional roles and responsibilities of CBO and determine whether the community economic development model can be implemented for CBO, thereby making CBO sustainable through the community economic model. For this purpose, 25 highly established CBOs were selected from 246 registered CBOs in the Anuradhapura District of the National Community Water Supply Department through comparative research design and qualitative research methodology. Case studies were constructed from data obtained through in-depth interviews with CBO officials and departmental officials, and in addition, data was also obtained through direct observation. It was revealed that the general function of CBOs related to water projects is to meet domestic and drinking water needs and improve village sanitation with good management using the concept of community development. Today, it can be said that the implementation of the community economic development model CBO has created high economic and social stability. The financial assets of all the CBOs studied exceeded 5 million and the social welfare sector was also at a very high level. Accordingly, by directing government funds only for the initial construction cost of CBOs and then implementing the community economic model, sustainable development of community-based organizations can be expected.

**Keywords:** Community Economic Development,  
Community Development, Community based Organization

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## 1. Introduction

The history and importance of community-based organization (CBO) in rural areas is a long one. They have been deeply involved in activities that have impacted on the livelihood on rural people. CBOs are formal voluntary social group that are found in communities which differ in size objective and degree of intern among members.in these organization, members have the ability to influence ideas and action of others with the purpose of plan, implement and monitor social and economic development programmes and provide technical and financial helps to the communities. CBO's positively affect the process of rural change through increase in income, improvement of health nutrition literacy of the people . some of the developmental programmes they introduce bring changes in the rural communities such as health, education, micro finance, micro enterprises, sustainable agriculture, animal, husbandry ,safe water and sanitation(Abegunde: 2009).

Although CBOs are established to address various priorities in a global context. CBOs that are established based on the need for drinking water and sanitation are regulated under the Department of National Community Water Supply (DNCWS). There are over 4500 such active CBOs in Sri Lanka and many of them are not limited to the need for drinking water. They go beyond this and carry out a wide range of community economic development activities.

About 12.37% people receive piped water through CBOs,. and the total beneficiary community exceeds three million(Departmental Performance reports ; 2022). As well as projects that were initially initiated

with foreign and local funded the water project launched under the name 'Praja Jala Abhimani" that began in 2019 are also being managed through CBOs. The government will bear 80% of the estimated funds for the entire water projects while the community will contribute the remaining 20Water that cannot be used for drinking purposes is treated through purification methods to meet the water needs of the community. The main source of income for CBO is water bills. It also provides employment opportunities for several members.

Going beyond the role of traditional CBOs, a modern approach to community economic development, with water project as the main focus, can be identified. By 2023 Anuradhapura was the district with highest financial assets.( Performance reports ; 2023).among all CBOs. Accordingly, It has become a timely need to review CBOs that contribute to economic and social development work while fulfilling the sixth of sustainable development goals.

### 1.1. Research Question

In order to provide solutions to one of the basic needs of humanity, the need for drinking water, various projects were carried out in Sri Lanka with foreign and local funded. Among them nearly 5000 projects were initiated through out Sri Lanka with the full support and financial contribution of international organizations such as the world bank, Asian Development bank, Danida and Finnida. Some of them were inactive, while about 4500 projects are currently being implemented, along with new community water projects. This

research aimed to identify the traditional roles and responsibilities of community-based organizations and to determine whether the community economic development model can be implemented for community-based organizations.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

The aim of this research was to investigate whether community-based organizations can be made sustainable by implementing the community economic development model within them.

## **1.3 Study Contribution**

This research data can be used as a guide for updating other CBOs of the Department of National Community Water Supply (DNCWS).

## **1.4 Importance Of study**

The study is important from both a theoretical and practical perspective. It provides an opportunities to gain insight into how CBOs ,founded on the basis of community development, have empowered human communities with in their traditional roles. In terms of theory, It identified how the practical application of theories such as PRA and the Capability approach has occurred. This study is largely of practical importance and can identify how community development within traditional CBOs can be expanded to include community economic development.

Community development is a process where community members take collective action on issues that are important to them. This might be done with or without a support of a community development professional or agency(AIFS; 2024).

## **2.2 What is Community Economic development**

Community economic development is a community process in which a community identifies its own economic and social problems and begins to solve them. His process in mainly implemented under the four objectives of job creation, stabilizing the local economy, developing local economic relations, ad improving the physical environment of the community. The concept introduced by United Nation Economic and Social Development Association as an economic system more suitable for developing countries and countries where production factors are regionally dispersed will also be more suitable for Sri Lanka (Rotaract ; 2021).

In 2009 Albert Ayorinde Abeygunde conducted a study on 140 CBOs in Oshogbo ,Nigeria, called The Role of Community based organization in economic development in Nigeria. The study assessed the role of CBOs in economic development and how they contribute to national economic development. It shows that developing countries can act as a vehicle for sustainable and socio – economic and physical development of communities (Abegunde: 2009).

A 2008 study by Hussain ,Anwar Hussain and Khattak, Naeem Ur Rehman Khattak and Khan ,Abdul Qayyam khan, titled Role of

## **2.Literature Review**

### **2.1 What is Community Development**

Community based Organizations in Rural Development : A case study of selected CBOs in District Swat shows that CBOs are making a difference in lives of the people in the sample area. More resources needs to be made available to enable CBOs further their activities for the development of rural communities(MPRA ;2008)

### 3.Methodology

#### 3.1 Study Area

When examining the registered community-based organizations of the National Community Water Supply Department, the highest financial assets are found in the Anuradhapura District. Accordingly, out of the registered community-based organizations of the Department, 25 community-based organizations that are currently implementing the community economic model, covering the entire Anuradhapura District, were selected for the study.

#### 3.2 Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was conducted on 25 community-based organizations with higher stability, comparatively considered, among the registered community-based organizations in the Anuradhapura district.

#### 3.3 Data Collection

##### Primary data Collection

Primary data was collected through 25 case studies for the 25 selected community-based organizations. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with community-based organization officers, departmental field officers, and

development officers to construct the case studies. The remaining data was obtained from the community-based organizations through direct observation.

S/N	Divisional Secretariats	CBO No.	Name Of CBO
01	Padaviya	01	Parakum
02	Kabithigollawa	01	Shakthi
03	Madawachchiya	01	Samagi
04	Rambawa	01	Ikrah
05	Mihintale	01	Welusumana
06	Kahatagasdigiya	01	Janasetha
07	Horowupothana	01	Upul
08	Galenbidunuwewa	02	Mahasen
09			Randiya
10	Thirappane	01	Pawasatadiya
11	Mahavilachchiya	02	Saliyamala
12			Wasana
13	Nochchiyagama	01	Shakthi
14	Thalawa	01	Randiya
15	Thambuttegama	01	Randiya
16	Rajanganaya	03	Mahasen Gamunu
17			Srama Shakthi
18			Samagi
19	Galnawa	01	Samagi
20	Ipalogama	01	Walawuwegama
21	Kekirawa	01	Datusena
22	Palagala	01	Samagi Shakthi
23	Palugaswewa	01	Swashakhi
24	Nuwaragam Palatha	01	Janasuwa
25	Nachchaduwa	01	Parakum
	Nuwaragam Palatha - East	-	Samagi
			Not Corerd DNCWS

#### Secondary Data

Departmental Performance reports, District Office Files and CBO Files.

#### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyses case study data and direct observation data, while contextual analysis was used to discuss the

traditional roles and responsibilities of CBOs and modern innovations.

## **4.Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

#### **Identify the traditional roles and responsibilities of community-based organizations**

The traditional role of a community-based organization has been to provide pipe water for drinking and domestic water needs and to install rainwater tanks in water – scarce areas. In addition, for sanitation purposes, loans are provided through the CBO to construct toilets. In this regard the necessary funds for the maintenance of water project have also been provided through the CBO through water bills.

#### **Implementing the community economic development model within community organizations**

Overtime, community development, along with community economic development ,has taken root in CBOs performing a developmental function beyond maintaining the water project. This occurs in both economic and social development. The financial assets of each CBO studied have exceeded 5 million. Each of these organization has a fixed account of over 2 million. Although the traditional source of income is the collection of water bills, each CBO has developed various new source of income. Among them micro finance loan programmes, selling purified water, mortgaging paddy fields, running shop with water equipment ,renting out buildings for

education centres and various special occasions, and growing and selling vegetables using waste water have developed income sources.

Not only the growth of the economic sector but also the growth of the social sector is necessary for development. Various welfare services have been provided to the members of the community-based organization and the beneficiary community. Among them, programs such as providing death benefits, providing higher education scholarships to children who pass the main government examinations, maintaining computer centres and libraries, conducting medical clinics, and providing financial support for public works in the area are prominent.

### **4.2 Recommendation**

The CBOs implementing the community economic development model have economic stability, which ensures the development of each organization. This situation is very productive and requires government funding only to start the project, and this methodology can be identified as a concept that should be expanded for the sustainability of the project and the development of the area. Overall, I suggest that it is appropriate to introduce this economic and social development model to other districts and lay the foundation for creating a community that is not dependent on the government.

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